



Australian Government

PCT/AU2004/000691

**PRIORITY  
DOCUMENT**

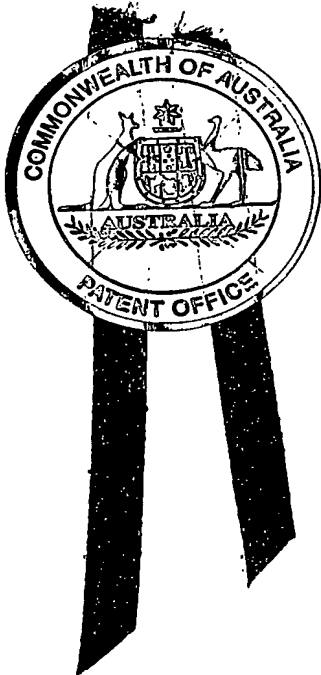
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I, LEANNE MYNOTT, MANAGER EXAMINATION SUPPORT AND  
SALES hereby certify that annexed is a true copy of the Complete specification  
in connection with Innovation Patent No. 2003100400 for a patent by ONLINE  
32S PTY LTD as filed on 29 May 2003.



WITNESS my hand this  
Second day of June 2004

LEANNE MYNOTT  
MANAGER EXAMINATION SUPPORT  
AND SALES

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## **METHOD AND APPARATUS FOR TRANSACTING LEGAL DOCUMENTS FIELD OF INVENTION**

The present invention relates to the transacting of legal and associated documents. In one example embodiment, the present invention relates to the handling of documentation associated with Real Estate and Legal Industries. In a specific example embodiment, the present invention relates to conveyancing and the publishing on the Internet of documentation for viewing by Estate Agents, Lawyers members of the public such as Buyers.

### **BACKGROUND ART**

The production of legal documentation for the sale of property has in general been paper based. This documentation includes the production of a contract and disclosure documentation to comply with the relevant property legislation ("contract documentation"). The contract documentation is generally passed onto an Estate Agent who markets the property by auction or private sale and negotiates the contract of sale between the vendor and the purchaser. The contract is passed back to the Vendor's lawyer and sent to the Purchaser's lawyer to complete the conveyancing and transfer of title.

For a lawyer / conveyancer to produce contract documentation, for example in Victoria and with a full set of title information and property certificates does require the collection, collation and compilation of up to 30 individual documents and then to photocopy and reproduce the contract documentation up to 5 times for delivery to the Agent in readiness for an Auction or sale by private treaty.

It is considered generally inconvenient that the current system is heavily paper based. All documentation prepared by the Lawyer is collected, photocopied, printed, collated, bound and delivered to the Agent by post, fax or courier. This is considered costly and time consuming.

A problem as yet unfulfilled by the prior art is a lack of timeliness in the supply of Property Certificates and Contract Documentation to the agent and prospective buyer. There are at least four main players in a sale process of a property. Each player has their own agenda mostly driven by economic factors.

**A. The Vendor:** The Vendor wants to maximize number of prospects to secure a high sale price and certainty of settlement for the property. The unavailability of Property Certificates reduces number of serious prospects and this may reflect on the end sale price.

5       **B. The Lawyer:** Lawyers not generally commissioned driven, relying upon a flat fee, and thus cost efficiencies, the speed of the transaction, the volume of the transaction, minimizing the cost of transaction and spending as little time and effort as possible in attending to necessities in conducting the conveyance are considered to be a driver of the lawyer. It has been observed  
10       that Lawyers tend to delay delivery of Property Certificates and contracts to prevent the replication of work due to agents requiring multiple copies for any transaction.

**C. The Agent:** The Agent may be a Real Estate Agent or parties who provide property information on the Internet on behalf of Real Estate Agents,  
15       such as:

<www.realestate.com.au>

<www.domain.com.au>

<www.realestateview.com.au>

<www.property.com.au>

20       It is considered that agents, being commission driven are generally not motivated to obtain Property Certificates themselves and consider it a function of the lawyers and conveyancers. The agents however desire Property Certificates as a marketing tool. Hence the agents require lawyers to provide them with Property Certificates and pass on the costs.

25       The Agent seeks to optimise commission from the sale and volume of the transaction, speed of concluding a transaction and maximising and qualifying the number of prospects. The agent wants documentation as early as possible in the selling cycle to distribute to prospective buyers. Typically contract documentation is delivered to the Agent in the week prior to the Auction or in response to an  
30       urgent demand or appeal made by the Agent to the Lawyer. Requests for copies of contract documentation are made by prospective buyers to undertake their due diligence and the Agents have to make additional copies for dissemination to the

prospective buyers of the property. Generally, Lawyers do not deliver contract documentation or part thereof in a timely fashion for a variety of reasons, and this causes the Agents concern as they may be at risk of losing a genuine buyer because of the delays in a Lawyer's delivery of contract documentation.

5       **D. Prospective buyers:** Prospective buyers tend to want Property Certificates and Contract Documentation to satisfy their due diligence and to possibly arrange finance in advance. This is not satisfactorily attended to now.

10       Often, the prospective buyer cannot view contract documentation in a timely manner. If they could, it would be considered to greatly assist in completing their due diligence of the property. Prospective buyers are interested in inspection, finance and due diligence in a timely fashion. They generally want to be able to view the contract documentation to determine measurements of the property, covenants & easements, planning, outgoings and any other information that can or may assist in the negotiation of price in their favour. Timely provision  
15 of contract documentation can thus assist this process to enable the prospective buyer to make an offer and if possible seal an agreement to purchase.

20       In the past, some advances have been made in the ordering and delivery of property certificates from a paper based postal system, to certificates being faxed. Recently property certificates can be now ordered online and delivered by service providers to the Lawyers by email. Nonetheless, the Lawyer still needs to obtain, collate and produce the contract and this is largely paper and labour intensive in nature and thereby considered relatively costly.

25       One prior art attempt is referred to as "CITEC CONFIRM" which is provided via the State of Queensland, Australia, the details of which are available at the time of writing at:

<http://www.confirm.citec.com.au/index.html>

30       In this model, as exemplified schematically in Figure 1, the majority of information is government information. In the past, documentation had to be ordered from information providers 100, such as various governing authorities, using paper forms 101, which was time consuming and thus costly. CITEC provided documents in electronic format which resulted in increased speed. But the disadvantage was that documents consisting of multiple pages 102 to 102n were

being produced as multiple files. A Lawyer or solicitor 103 receiving multiple files would still have to prepare the various other forms and documents in a paper based format. The Figure also shows a number of similar information providers 100, such as 'Anstat' and 'Legalco' who provide documents within the State of Victoria, Australia.

Another prior art attempt (not shown) provides the contract information as a single file of about 2MB in size which meant the time to download such a file via a 56K modem would take a number of minutes. It is considered that this is too long, especially for people connected to the Internet, and thus the downloading of such big files tends to be doomed to failure unless the person has broadband cable technology. However, this is not widely accessible in more remote areas.

Still another prior art attempt is referred to as Electronic Conveyancing Victoria (ECV). Figure 2 schematically represents this model. In figure 2, ECV 200 attends to the whole of the conveyancing process subsequent to the sale of a property, such as between lenders 201, mortgagees 202, and government authorities 203. The ECV model is considered to focus more on the recordal of a sale and related money transactions, rather than the initial sale preparation.

Any discussion of documents, devices, acts or knowledge in this specification is included to explain the context of the invention. It should not be taken as an admission that any of the material forms a part of the prior art base or the common general knowledge in the relevant art in Australia or elsewhere on or before the priority date of the disclosure and claims herein.

#### **SUMMARY OF INVENTION**

The present invention provides, in one aspect, a method of and apparatus for making available information, including documents, relating to the legal and / or real estate industries for viewing and / or printing via the Internet, the method including the steps of obtaining information relating to a property in an electronic format, providing the information at a first location, and providing a hyperlink for the information between the first location and a second location.

Preferably, the first location is any one or a combination of database, website or Internet.

Preferably, the second location is any one or a combination of database, website or Internet.

5

Preferably, the method relates to a real-estate transaction.

Preferably, the first location is a database or host website.

Preferably, the second location is an agent's website.

5 Preferably, the method further includes the step of providing a hyperlink between property information, such as a thumbnail or property photograph and associated information.

Preferably, the method further includes the step of publishing the information with authorisation.

10 The present invention also provides, a computer program product including a computer usable medium having computer readable program code and computer readable system code embodied on said medium for making available information relating to the legal and / or real estate industries within a data processing system, said computer program product including computer readable code within said computer usable medium for performing a method as disclosed  
15 herein.

Preferably, the present invention brings together disparate information in an electronic format from various sources, inserts it into a database and then automatically publishes them together on a host web page for public inspection. The hyperlink can be provided by various commonly available software packages.

20 Preferably, the present provides the creation of a database containing Property Information in respect to real estate. The database may be relational or centralised.

Preferably, the Property Information may consist of

- 25 a. Property Profile: the property details are disclosed herein and are listed in Figure 7.
- b. Contract Documentation, such as Property Certificates, Contract of Sale and Client legal Documents. Property Certificates may include the documents 21 to 39 on Figure 6. Contract of Sale may include the documents 11 to 20 of Figure 6. Client Legal Documents may include the  
30 documents 40 to 49 on Figure 6.

Preferably, the present invention provides for publication of, and access to, Property Information via Web-page by way of hyperlink(s) to a Database or other

location where the Property Information resides. The hyperlink may describe the type of Property Information it provides access to.

5 Preferably, the Property Information will be published on a web-page (identified with the Lawyer) accessed via the Agents website for 24/7 viewing or printing by the Agent, Lawyer, Client / Property owner, Prospective Buyer and Purchaser's Lawyer.

Preferably, to view the Property Information on the webpage a prospective purchaser as a pre-condition must sign a Guestbook giving name, email and contact details which can or may be passed back to the Agent.

10 Preferably, the Property Information can be published in whole or in part with the Lawyer's authorization (or not published for public viewing by veto until the Lawyer is satisfied it is ready to be published).

15 The present invention provides, in a second aspect, a method of and apparatus for uploading information, including documents, relating to the real estate or legal industries to a database, the method including the step of assigning at least one unique code to each information, where the at least one code identifies the property and the type of information.

Preferably, the code is an Internet meta-tag or meta data.

20 Preferably, the tag enables the information to be displayed in a predetermined order.

The present invention also provides, a computer program product including a computer usable medium having computer readable program code and computer readable system code embodied on said medium for uploading information, including documents, relating to the real estate or legal industries to a database within a data processing system, said computer program product including computer readable code within said computer usable medium for performing a method as disclosed herein.

25 Preferably, upon uploading of Property Information into the Database unique codes are assigned to each document (codes may be Internet meta tags or alpha / numeric codes; code assignment maybe automatically generated by computer software or done manually) which identifies the property and the specific type of Property Information.

30

Preferably, the host of the Lawyers Website can provide a total print solution for the Contract Documentation to the Lawyer and the Agent. When the Contract Documents are published on the Property Webpage, they may appear in a very specific order, first the Contract Documents (documents 11 – 19), secondly  
5 the Property Certificates (documents 21 – 39) and thirdly the Legal Documents (documents 40 – 49). This is the typical order that Property Contracts are collated. In publishing the documents in this order it becomes possible to provide a technical solution to printing the Contract Documentation in this Order by a single command (provided all the requisite documents have been uploaded). This  
10 print solution may be provided as a bureau service to the Lawyer and the Agent.

Preferably, the present invention (a) gathers all separate & disparate documents into a database, (b) extracts only the relevant documents that are associated with that property (c) has them sorted into the correct order and (d) then printing all by a single command.

15 Preferably, the Property Information will be displayed in an ordered manner to reflect the same order that a Lawyer would typically create and collate Contract or Auction documentation.

The present invention provides, in a third aspect, a webpage, a method of generating a webpage and apparatus therefor relating to the legal or real estate  
20 industries, the webpage including a property profile and reference to at least one property document.

Preferably, the reference to at least one document is a hyperlink.

Preferably, the property documents include contract documents, property certificates and / or legal documents.

25 Preferably, the webpage further includes a checklist as to the availability of at least one property document.

Preferably, a status indicator is provided that includes information such as whether the document is linked, on order, to be supplied, not being supplied or not applicable.

30 Preferably, in generating the webpage a further step is included, namely, when a property profile including Agent details is added, generating a unique hyperlink to the agent's website.



Preferably, in generating the webpage a further step is included, namely, generating an email to the agent notifying the agent of the hyperlink generated.

The present invention also provides a computer program product including a computer usable medium having computer readable program code and computer readable system code embodied on said medium for generating a  
5 webpage relating to the legal or real estate industries within a data processing system, said computer program product including computer readable code within said computer usable medium for performing a method as disclosed herein.

Preferably, a checklist is published on the Website to indicate whether an  
10 individual Property Information document is supplied, to be supplied, not required, not applicable or on order but not yet available. The Property Database may contain a checklist for all possible Property Information documents that may be associated for any property. The authorised person when adding the Property Profile may update the checklist. As Property Information documents are  
15 uploaded into the database the checklist may be updated either automatically or manually. The checklist status that may be displayed on the Property webpage as viewed by the Public and may mirror the checklist on the Property Database.

Preferably, when the Lawyer adds a Property Profile that includes the Agent's details, the unique hyperlink to the Property webpage (162) may be  
20 automatically generated and then be emailed to the Agent. The Agent may manually insert the hyperlink onto the Agent's Property webpage.

There are a number of advantages identifiable with the present invention, such as:

- 25 1. The bringing together of disparate information in an electronic format from various sources,
2. inserting it into a computer database
3. publishing them together on a host web page
4. accessing of the Property information from the host webpage via a hyperlink to the database where the Property information resides
- 30 5. checklist published on the web page showing clearly what Property Information documents are supplied, to be supplied or not to be supplied but viewer to make own inquiries

6. with a hyperlink between the agents web page and the host web page for the Property Information with a compulsory guestbook
7. cost & time effective over existing methodologies

5 The present invention is considered to provide a meaningful solution for the Lawyer's client who is the Vendor. The Vendor who is selling their property wants to achieve the best price for their property. The Vendor has engaged an estate agent to market and sell their property for the best possible price. Property legislation requires that the Vendor must provide a disclosure statement and that the contract must be in writing. As described beforehand supply of that  
10 information has been only been available in and supplied via a paper based format by the Lawyer for the Vendor who has not delivered the Property Information in a timely fashion. This invention provides for the timely provision of the Property Information in part or in whole.

15 It is important from the estate agents' perspective to have the quickest and best access to the Property Information. This invention can deliver the Property Information in a timely fashion which can be viewed by prospective buyers 24/7 by simply following the link from the agents' webpage to the host webpage for the Property Information.

20 The prospective buyers can complete their due diligence on looking at properties they may be interested in buying instantly from anywhere in the world via the Internet. Buyers want to be able to inspect the title information, plans, planning information, property outgoings and any other pertinent information on demand instead of chasing the Agent who is chasing the Lawyer.

25 Agents want to know who is interested in buying the property and one of their main tools is when a prospect asks to inspect the Property Information. This invention compels the prospect to sign a guestbook in order to gain access to the contract documents on the host website (the Property Information resides on the 247legal webserver) and their details can then be provided to the Agent.

30 Lawyers understand that a major overhead in the office is the time and cost of collecting, collation and reproducing the Property Information for the Agents. This invention will reduce the Lawyers overheads because of the reduction of reliance of paper and printing as the information is available on the website for Agents to print them off themselves.

Agents will have earlier access to Property Information which is what they have always wanted but has never been delivered in a timely fashion. The Agents overheads, too, will be reduced as now they can direct prospects to view the Property Information online instead of the printing and reproduction and physical dissemination of Property Information.

Other aspects and preferred aspects are disclosed in the specification and/or defined in the appended claims, forming a part of the description of the invention.

In essence, the present invention enables the production of a client's Property Information without using the photocopier or other paper based forms of media. The problem faced in the past has been the heavy reliance on paper collection collation and reproduction which heavily relied on photocopiers being costly and time consuming. Once all documentation can be stored on the hard drive of a PC in (Adobe Acrobat) PDF format led to the idea of integrating the documents into a database that can then be parsed into a webpage viewable online, downloaded and printed at the location of the person seeking the information.

There is also a significant demand for this invention. Prospective buyers are doing more of their research online from their home and office and will embrace the possibility of viewing contractual documentation before they make a decision to make an offer to buy.

#### **DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS**

Further disclosure, objects, advantages and aspects of the present application may be better understood by those skilled in the relevant art by reference to the following description of preferred embodiments taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which:

Figure 1 illustrates an example of a prior art model for seeking documents,

Figure 2 illustrates another prior art model referred to as ECV,

Figure 3 illustrates schematically one embodiment of the present invention,

Figure 3A illustrates schematically an alternative embodiment of the present invention referred to as "the MiniPak" model,

Figure 4 illustrates schematically the present invention in more detail particularly the relational database model.

Figure 5 illustrates schematically a Prospect Flow chart for accessing certificates,

Figure 6 illustrates schematically an example of Document Codes,

Figure 7 illustrates schematically an example of a Lawyers' Property Profile Database for use with the present invention, and

Figure 8 illustrates schematically an example of a 247legal property web page in accordance with the present invention.

#### **DETAILED DESCRIPTION**

One example embodiment of the present invention relates to the sale of real estate comprised of securing of government information electronically and information created electronically by the Vendor and the Vendor's solicitor, legally required to effect the sale, for publication on websites thus enabling public inspection by prospective purchasers.

Referring to Figure 3, there are a number of entities which inter-relate to transact a property sale, namely, the Client / Vendor (100), the Property (101), the Agent (110), the Lawyer (120), the Prospect / Buyer (130), the Prospect / Buyer's Solicitor (140), the Information Provider (150), and 247legal.com.au (160) which represents one part of the present invention.

It all starts with the Vendor 100 who wants to sell his/her property 101. The Vendor 100 engages the Agent 110 to sell the property and retains a Lawyer or Conveyancer 120 to act on his/her behalf. The two main players are the Vendor 100 and the Prospect 130 (who will be the ultimate Buyer). In between are the Agent 110, the Lawyers 120 and the Information Providers 150 and now 247legal.com.au 160.

#### **The Vendor 100**

The Vendor having engaged the Agent to sell the Property will retain a Lawyer / Conveyancer to act on their behalf.

The Vendor is the Owner of the Property 101. Their desire is usually to obtain as much money as possible for their property and to secure the settlement. This is achieved by maximizing the number of prospects 130 to acquire the property 101.

**The Property 101**

The Property may be residential, commercial, industrial, rural, vacant land or an apartment in a high rise building or any brand of real estate.

5 In Victoria, Property under the Sale of Land Act 1962 (Victoria) is defined as follows:

"land" includes land of any tenure, and buildings or parts of buildings (whether the division is horizontal, vertical or made in any other way) and other corporeal hereditaments; and also an undivided share in land and any estate or interest in land.

10 Property is not a commodity. Property is regulated as to how and what it can be used for and its use is restricted by the local Planning and Zoning regulations. Property is taxed and is affected by council and water levies. It can attract land tax. It might be affected by a body corporate. The Property may be leased. The Buildings on the Property may be classified by the National Trust.  
15 The Property may be affected by a road widening proposal or subject to contamination, or be in a land slip area, subject to flooding or have had land fill. This list is not exhaustive.

Much of the above can be determined by inspection. Each state in Australia has its own Property legislation and in Victoria for example the Vendor must provide a disclosure statement or Vendor's Statement. The Vendor is  
20 obligated to provide certain statutory information regarding the Property before a legally binding contract can be made.

**The Agent 110**

The Agent (Real Estate Agent) acts for the Vendor for the marketing and  
25 negotiation of the sale of the Property. The Agent may also use an agent to assist in the promotion of the property on the Internet via such intermediaries such as [www.realestate.com.au](http://www.realestate.com.au) or [www.property.com.au](http://www.property.com.au)

The Agent liaises with the Prospects and keeps the Vendor informed as to the height of interest, feedback and to convey any offers.

30 The Agent and the Vendor set a marketing program and budget which covers classified advertising, brochures, floor plans, display board, magazine and website.

The Agent also uses the Property Certificates ((151) - (154)) as a marketing tool.

5 The Property Certificates are, for example, the title and property information that Government and Statutory authorities have that affect every  
10 Property and contains important information such as the certificate of title, the plan of subdivision, any encumbrances such as covenants or easements, planning information, council and water levies, land tax, building and occupancy permits, contamination etc. Property Certificates are typically obtained from  
15 Intermediaries described as Information Providers (150) but they can be obtained direct from the Government and Statutory authorities by application and payment of a fee. The Property Certificates allow the Prospects to do their due diligence on the Property. Title information allows the Prospect to identify the Property, conduct a survey of the measurements and assess the potential for development. The title will also disclose all registered easements, covenants, mortgages and  
20 caveats. Planning information gives you the zoning and you can determine whether the current use is legal or what the alternate use you can use the property for in the future. The Prospect wants to know what the current outgoings and levies affect the property. Does the Property have a contamination order? What are the body corporate levies or regulations? Are there any outstanding orders or arrears of land tax, council or water rates?

The Agent can use the Property Certificates 151-154 as a marketing tool as they answer many of the myriad questions prospects have.

For reasons of cost and efficiency the Agent gets the Vendor's lawyer to obtain the Property Certificates.

25 The Agent is relatively commission driven. When the Agent sets a marketing budget the obtaining of Property Certificates is left to the Lawyer and it is seen as a legal function. The standing status quo is the Lawyer applies for the Property Certificates on the Vendor's behalf and provides the Property Certificates with the legal and contractual documentation.

30 **The Lawyer 120**

The Vendor engages the Lawyer to act on their behalf and prepare the documentation as required to effect a disposal of the property and to provide legal counsel.

## 14

There are many steps to take in the sale process. The Lawyer starts by taking detailed instructions from the Vendor regarding the Property and then, for example:

- Ascertains the title information such as the Lot/Plan and/or Volume/Folio
- 5 • Orders the Property Certificates from a Information Provider (150)
- Collects from the Vendor other property information such as any Lease, building information and body corporate information
- Prepares the Contract of Sale and Vendors Statement
- Collates the Property Certificates, other Property Information and the
- 10 • Contract of Sale & Vendors Statement (the Contract Documentation)
- Makes multiple copies of the Contract Documentation
- Couriers or delivers the Contract Documentation to the Agent.

The above describes a Pre-Contractual process.

- The Agent will often request copies of the Property Certificates before the
- 15 Lawyer has completed the Contract Documentation which for the Lawyer means duplication of his job. The Lawyer's problem is that his fee is often fixed and therefore any additional work is not being compensated. Because the Lawyer receives a flat fee for acting for a Vendor they wish to expend as little as time and energy in preparing contracts and obtaining property certificates. Lawyers are
- 20 also relatively volume driven.

Although it does vary from Country to Country and region to region, in Victoria to effect a sale, the Vendor produces a Vendors Statement which discloses certain information on the property.

- If the Lawyer doesn't get this right or fails to supply all the information
- 25 required to be supplied in the statements or certificates required to be given by this section, the purchaser may rescind any contract for the sale of the land which has been entered into on the basis of that information at any time before he accepts title and becomes entitled to possession or to the receipt of rents and profits, as is defined by the relevant Laws, such as section 32(5) Sale of Land Act
- 30 (Victoria).

**The Prospect 130**

For any Property there is only one Buyer but usually more than one Prospect. Prospects are potential buyers. The Prospect may be acting as an agent for others.

- 5       The Prospect searches out properties that they are interested in buying. In being faced with those options they will research the likely valuation for that Property. What are the land measurements or how many square meters is the apartment? The size of the property will be a gauge of the property valuation on a \$ per square metre and provides a comparison bench mark with similar  
10       properties that have been sold. They will want to know much of the information that is presented within the Property Certificates such as the outgoings and the planning Information. This process is the due diligence that every Prospect should or does conduct. ("due diligence")

- 15       The prospect may need to arrange finance and the Bank and its valuers will want the information contained in the Property Certificates.

The Prospect is the one party who potentially is making the most commitments (financial & legal)

The Property Certificate inspection is an integral part of the due diligence.

**The Buyer's Solicitor 140**

- 20       The Prospect can request his solicitor to view the Property Information and Property Certificates and to give advice on any matter or concern the Prospect has before an offer to buy is made.

- 25       The Purchaser's solicitor may actually make inquiries on behalf of the Prospect. To give counsel to a Prospect before they buy it would be a great advantage to have ready access to the Contract Documents. Viewing the Property Certificates and to advise on the Title and Planning Information and any other available legal information as well as the Contract requires this information can be provided in a timely fashion which it often isn't and isn't provided until the day before the Auction. Is there a better system?

- 30       **The Information Provider 150**

The Information Provider's may be any source, such as for example in Victoria, Legaico, CITEC and Anstat commercially supply the Property Certificates in an electronic form to the Lawyer ordering the Property Certificates



via the Internet and the Information provider delivering the Property Certificates by email in (Adobe Acrobat) PDF format (151) (152), (153) & (154) in a timely fashion.

5 The Information Provider acts as an Intermediary between the originator of the property certificates (eg Land Titles Office & councils) and those who wish to obtain them, acting as a one stop shop.

The Information Provider do not publish any Property Certificates on the Internet for public access. Rather they only supply property certificates directly to those who order and pay for them.

10 247legal.com.au 161

The present invention, referred to as 247legal.com.au may be a website where Property Information is published. The information is published in a dynamic manner. The rendering of the webpage to display the Property Information for the Property is dynamic. It is not static. As various components of the Property Information are logged into the Database these are viewable anytime a Prospect requests to view the Property Information for the Property.

20 The Database 161 resides on 247legal.com.au's web server. The Database is made up of 4 databases, such as Agent General 171, Lawyer General 172, Property Profile 173, and Lawyers Docs (Documents) 174, as illustrated in Figure 4.

Any authorised person can log onto the 247legal website via a web browser. That member can update their details. A Lawyer can update their profile details such as address, telephone, email, employees, logo etc. Ditto for the Agent. This is done by the Lawyer / Agent from any Internet browser.

25 At any time they, generally being the Lawyer, can add a Property and its profile. First step is adding the Property details to the 247legal database and profiling the Property. The typical details for the Property will be Unit no., Street No.; Street Address; Suburb; Postcode; Municipality; Lot No.; Plan Subdivision; Title details (Victoria its is Volume/Folio or Lot/Plan); The Vendor's details; The Selling Agent's details.

30 At the same time that a new Property Profile is added a unique property code is created (based on the Lot Plan numbers) by the software which also creates the Property web page (162). The unique Property Code is embedded

Into the Property Web page as its webpage identifier. The webpage identifier is emailed to the Agent as a hyperlink for inclusion on the Agent's website 115. The hyperlink can be created by any known means, including available software packages. The coding facilitates the creation of the webpage and the cross  
5 referencing of the property Documents to the correct Property. The hyperlink also facilitates the referencing of the entities or parties and information.

The Lawyer then uploads the Property Information Documents via their web browser. The Lawyer will over course of the conveyancing process:

- 10 • Order Property Certificates (151) – (154) from the Information Provider (150). The Information Provider will email the Property Certificates back to the Lawyer as PDF files
- 15 • Collect other Client Legal Documents (102) – (106) from their client or third parties. These documents such as Leases, building warranties, body corporate certificates and building condition survey report. The Lawyer then scans and converts the documents into an electronic format. . Or another way is that the documents are faxed to the host website which has software to convert the document to the electronic format. The Lawyer can log onto the Property Database and then tag the faxed documents which are now in the correct format for viewing; and
- 20 • Create the Contract Documents (121) – (125) typically in word format and then convert to an electronic format using appropriate software.

The Individual Property Documents can be uploaded to the 247legal database 161. Each Property Information Document will be tagged with metadata that will relate the Property Information Document to the Property and  
25 describe the type of Property Information Document. Figure 6 illustrates an example of tagging codes. The numbering of the tags also enables the whole contract and legal documents to be printed sequentially as if it is one document when requested. This enables anyone to obtain a copy of the documents available in an intelligible order. In the tagging process, the Lawyer will select  
30 "the Property" and "the Property Information type" and to upload select "Insert Document" whereby the Property Information Document will be uploaded onto the 247legal web server database.

There will also be a Document Checklist (128) on the Property Database so the Lawyer can track which Property Information Documents are "Linked" "On Order"; "Not being supplied"; "Not Applicable". Figures 7 and 8 give more details.

5 The Checklist is an important tool to the Lawyer acting for the Vendor as well as for all the other parties.

From the Lawyer's perspective he can track which documents are and which documents won't form part of the total Property Information. The Lawyer can then track whether all the documents have been obtained or whether any still remain outstanding. Documents are either: applicable and "On order" or they  
10 have been supplied and now "Linked"; or "Not Applicable" or "Not being supplied". The Lawyer has the discretion whether to order or provide a property certificate or not provide it as there is a cost to providing any property certificate. The Lawyer may exercise that discretion not to provide a property certificate for monetary reasons or simply considers it does not add any value in providing that particular  
15 property certificate. The Lawyer may elect to publish all or any of the Property Information Documents or not publish at this stage giving the Lawyer control over what the Public may view on the Internet.

The Public can also see the checklist status knowing that if any document that is not published then whether that document will be provided but is simply not  
20 yet available.

The Property Information Documents may be tagged "Publish"; or "Do Not Publish" which gives control over what will be published on the 247legal website for the Public / Prospects to view. The Lawyer acting for the Vendor is responsible to see that the Property Information Documents are in order. The first step is to  
25 upload the Property Information Documents onto the host webserver. The Lawyer needs to then check that the Contract Documents are in order and is satisfied they are ready to be published for Public / Prospects to view. There can be costly ramifications for any documents being inaccurate.

The Prospect viewing the Property webpage (162) can view the Property  
30 Information Documents that are published and links are provided to view those Individual Property Information Documents. They will also be able to view a Checklist of documents that are "On Order" or "Not being supplied" or "Not

Applicable". This gives the person viewing the website an immediate indication of the type and details of the information available from the website.

As the Lawyer is receiving Contract Documents these documents can be inserted and uploaded (Figure 6) onto the 247legal.com.au database. The system being dynamic the Prospects and the Agent can view and print the available Property Information Documents and the status of all Property Information Documents.

The Property Page when viewed on the Internet may typically have the following information:

- 10 • Property description or address
- Photo of the property
- Agent logo with link back to Agent's website
- Lawyer's Logo with link back to Lawyer's website
- Summary of Property
- 15 • Links to individual to Contract Documents viewable as pdf files
- Links to Individual Property Certificates each viewable as pdf files
- Links to Individual Client Legal Documents each viewable as pdf files
- Checklist of documents not yet supplied but to be supplied or simply Not Applicable
- 20 • Disclaimer or Warning: typically could read as "Until all certificates are uploaded and the Vendor has signed the Section 32 Statement these documents are for information only. We suggest that you seek independent legal advice before signing a contract of sale."

25 The Agent can update the details of their Profile including their contact nos. and Logo (171).

The Agent, also, has the option of ordering a set of Property Certificates (151) – (154) which 247legal.com.au can provide as a bureau service and these too will be published on the 247legal.com.au website (refer Figure 3A) which is the MiniPak embodiment.

30 Part of the Agent's role as selling agent for the Vendor is to order Photos of the Property and to create a Property webpage on their own website. The

20

Agent will be able to upload the Photo or Thumbnail (112) of the Property to be inserted and uploaded onto the Property Database.

As soon as the Lawyer has added a Property Profile to the database, the host website will email the Agent with a hyperlink (114) to be inserted into the Agent's Property webpage linked back to the 247legal.com.au website and this will launch / create the correct Property page.

The Agent can then view the status and progress of the Lawyer. The Agent then has ready access to the Title, the Plan, the Property Certificates and Contract Documents. The Agent can view, download and print all or any of the Property Information Documents. The Agent can direct Prospects to the Agent's own website and the Prospect follows the links to the 247legal.com.au website to view the Property Information Documents. Or the Agent can simply print a copy of the Property Information Documents and give them direct to the Prospect.

The Agent no longer has to wait for the Lawyer to supply the Property Information Documents or chase the Lawyer for a copy of all or any of the Property Information Documents. As soon as the Lawyer has uploaded all or any of the Property Information Documents they are ready for viewing – 247.

The Prospect has equal access to the Property Information Documents as any other party. As soon as the Lawyer has uploaded the Property Information Documents any person and that includes the Prospect can view all or any of the Property Information Documents.

However, in one embodiment, referring to Figure 5, before the Prospect can view the Property Information Documents, the Prospect has to complete the Guestbook (132). For the Agent one of the key indicators that a prospect has more than a passing interest in a Property is when the Prospect requests to view the Property Information (162). If Property Information is able to be viewed online, the Prospect can bypass the Agent. It is important to give this feedback to the Agent and this can be achieved to a degree by the Prospect completing the Guestbook 132 when wanting to view the Property Information 162. When the Prospect views the Property on the Agent's website, they can click on the link to view the Property Information, and the Prospect will have to first complete the Guestbook. Figure 5 illustrates a flow chart which is relatively self explanatory

regarding the steps taken for a prospect to complete the guest book and view certificates.

Typically the Prospect will give their name, email address, contact details, reason for viewing (simple checkbox – new home, investment, estate agent, solicitor) and comment. This information is given back to the Agent for following up the Prospect. This is very important as traditionally at the time the Prospect makes a request of an Agent to view Property Information Documents the Agent knew he had a Prospect with more than a passing interest in the Property.

The Prospect can complete their due diligence in a timely fashion. The Prospect is in the position then to make a decision to make an offer or to bid at an auction.

There is potentially a lot of upside in the process being conducted in accordance with the present invention. It also reduces the generation of paper copies of the Property Information which can now simply be viewed online via any PC connected to the Internet.

Other embodiments contemplated include:

Figure 3A illustrates a simplified embodiment of Figure 3. In this embodiment, 247legal acts a bureau rather simply as a repository. The Agent or person requiring to have the Property Certificates (151 – 154) approaches 247legal (160) requesting that the documents are obtained on their behalf for publication on a website. 247legal (160) then obtains documents from Infosource (150), upon receipt uploads the documents onto the database (161). The accessing of the Documents is as per Figure 3.

Decentralized – The agent/solicitor will obtain the electronically government information from suppliers and will upload that information once obtained onto their own websites for public inspection alongside general information supplied by the Vendor converted into an electronic format and manually uploaded onto the agent/solicitors website as well as contractual information created by the Vendor's solicitor converted into an electronic format and uploaded onto the agent/solicitors website.

Centralized – where a bureau "247legal" that acts on behalf of agents and solicitors. Figure 4 illustrates an example of this. The present invention will provide and maintain a dynamic web database management system (DBMS),

using a database for publication of property and contractual information sourced from: (a) suppliers of government information in electronic format, such as property information documents (b) vendors of property or via agents 110 or solicitor 120 with those documents converted into electronic format; and (c) Vendor's solicitors 120 being the contractual documentation converted into electronic format. The Vendor's solicitor will have access to its Database (hosted by the 247legal bureau with password protection) with ability to view, add and update the property and contractual documentation with control to publish any or all that information to the Database for public viewing via their internet browser.

10 The Vendors Solicitor (120) is the "proprietor" of the information that is inserted into the database represented by boxes 172, 173 & 174 (and that information is detailed below the respective boxes 172, 173 & 174). Solicitor 120 has the ability to add, view, delete or change any of the information contained in the database. The Agent (110) has the responsibility to add, view, delete or  
15 change the information in the database represented by the information underneath box 171. The Public 130 will have access to all property and contractual documentation published on the 247legal website 162 either by link from Agent's website 115 or directly through 247legal website.

The present invention is a pre-Contractual tool to assist the Legal and Real  
20 Estate Industry. All parties may benefit from the Property Information Documents being published on the Internet so any of the parties can view the documents as they are available. The system encourages the Lawyer to have the Property Information Documents published at the concurrent time the Agent has the Property published on the Agent's website.

25 The System may be enhanced at later stages to dovetail into a post contractual system such as ECV, an example of which is represented schematically in Figure 2.

The System may be enhanced to actually generate the Contract of Sale, the Vendors Statement and any other Contractual Documentation. That is, utilize  
30 the information loaded into the 247legal.com.au database to generate form documents. This also extends to the system ordering Property Certificates from the Information Providers based on the information loaded onto the database.

The present invention may provide a print solution for the Lawyer and Agent. Typically for an auction the Agent wants 5 copies of the Auction Documents which is the collation of all the Contract Documents. If all the Contract Documents have been published, 247legal.com.au can provide a bureau  
5 print service and deliver bound copies of the Auction Documents to the Agent and copy to the lawyer for the auction of the Property.

The System is considered a sound foundation for pre-contractual disclosure and dissemination of the public information held by government and statutory authorities relating to any Property in a timely and dynamic manner.

10 While this invention has been described in connection with specific embodiments thereof, it will be understood that it is capable of further modification(s). This application is intended to cover any variations uses or adaptations of the invention following in general, the principles of the invention and including such departures from the present disclosure as come within known  
15 or customary practice within the art to which the invention pertains and as may be applied to the essential features hereinbefore set forth.

As the present invention may be embodied in several forms without departing from the spirit of the essential characteristics of the invention, it should be understood that the above described embodiments are not to limit the present  
20 invention unless otherwise specified, but rather should be construed broadly within the spirit and scope of the invention as defined in the appended claims. Various modifications and equivalent arrangements are intended to be included within the spirit and scope of the invention and appended claims. Therefore, the specific embodiments are to be understood to be illustrative of the many ways in  
25 which the principles of the present invention may be practiced. In the following claims, means-plus-function clauses are intended to cover structures as performing the defined function and not only structural equivalents, but also equivalent structures. For example, although a nail and a screw may not be structural equivalents in that a nail employs a cylindrical surface to secure  
30 wooden parts together, whereas a screw employs a helical surface to secure wooden parts together, in the environment of fastening wooden parts, a nail and a screw are equivalent structures.



**THE CLAIMS DEFINING THE INVENTION ARE AS FOLLOWS:**

**1. A method of making available information, including documents, relating to the legal and / or real estate industries for viewing and / or printing via the Internet, the method including the steps of:**

**obtaining information relating to a property in an electronic format,**

**providing the information at a first location,**

**providing a hyperlink for the information between the first location and a second location,**

**wherein the first location is a database or host website and the second location is an agent's website.**

**2. A method of uploading information, including documents, relating to the real estate or legal industries to a database, the method including the step of:**

**assigning at least one unique code to each information, where the at least one code identifies the property and the type of information.**

**3. A webpage relating to the legal or real estate industries, the webpage including:**

**a property profile; and**

**reference to at least one property document.**

**4. A method of generating a webpage relating to the legal or real estate industries, the method including the steps of:**

**providing a property profile; and**

**providing a reference to at least one property document.**

25

5. Apparatus adapted to perform a method, said apparatus including:  
processor means adapted to operate in accordance with a predetermined  
instruction set,  
said apparatus, in conjunction with said instruction set, being adapted to perform  
the method as claimed in any one of claims 1, 2, or 4.

DATED THIS 29th day of May 2003

SMOORENBURG PATENT & TRADE MARK ATTORNEYS  
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AUSTRALIA

26

**ABSTRACT**

The present invention relates to the transacting of legal and associated documents. In one example embodiment, the present invention relates to the handling of documentation associated with Real Estate and Legal Industries. In a specific example embodiment, the present invention relates to conveyancing and the publishing on the Internet of documentation for viewing by Estate Agents, Lawyers members of the public such as Buyers.

The present invention relates to a method of making information available, a method of uploading information, generating a webpage and apparatus therefore.

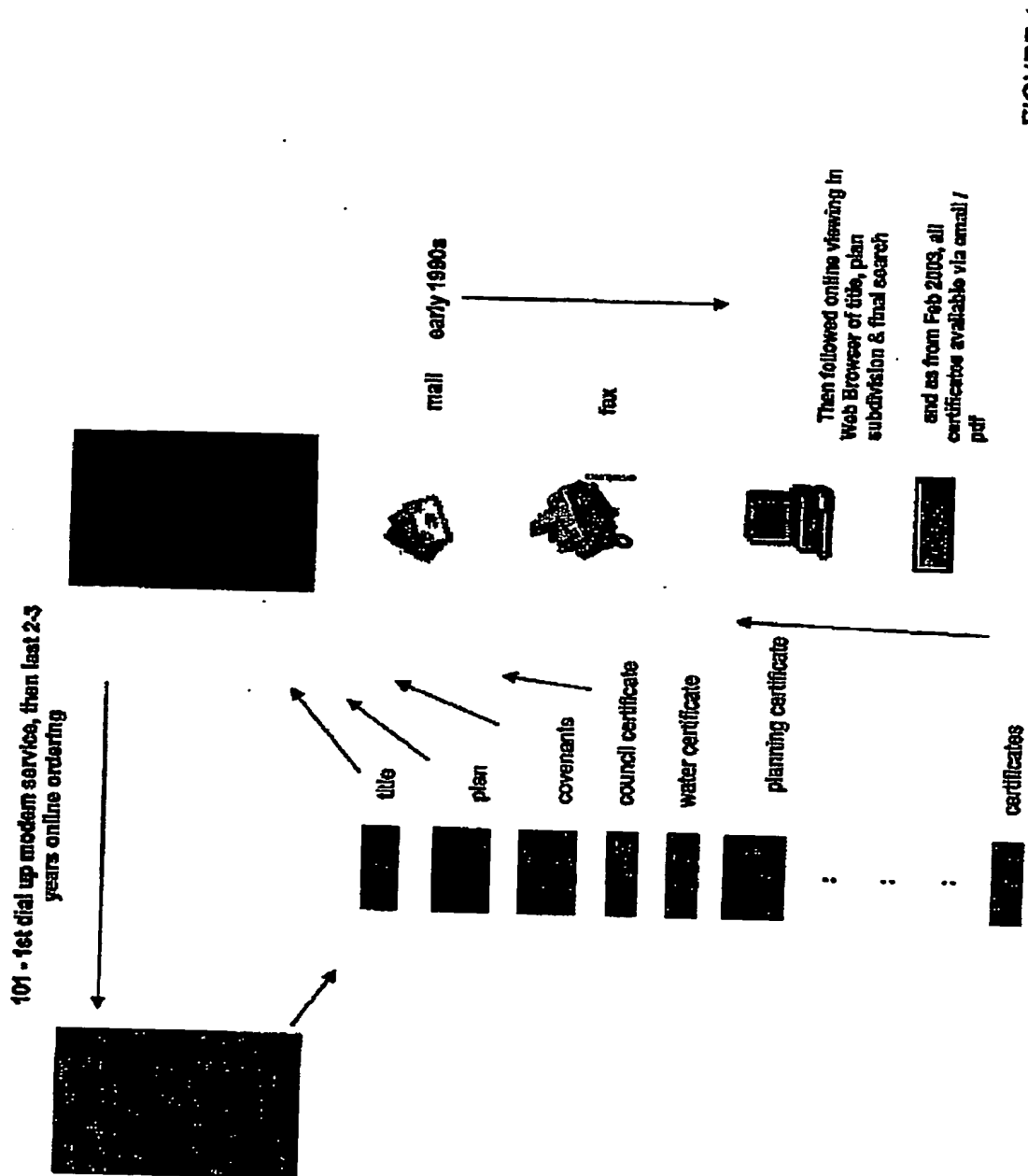
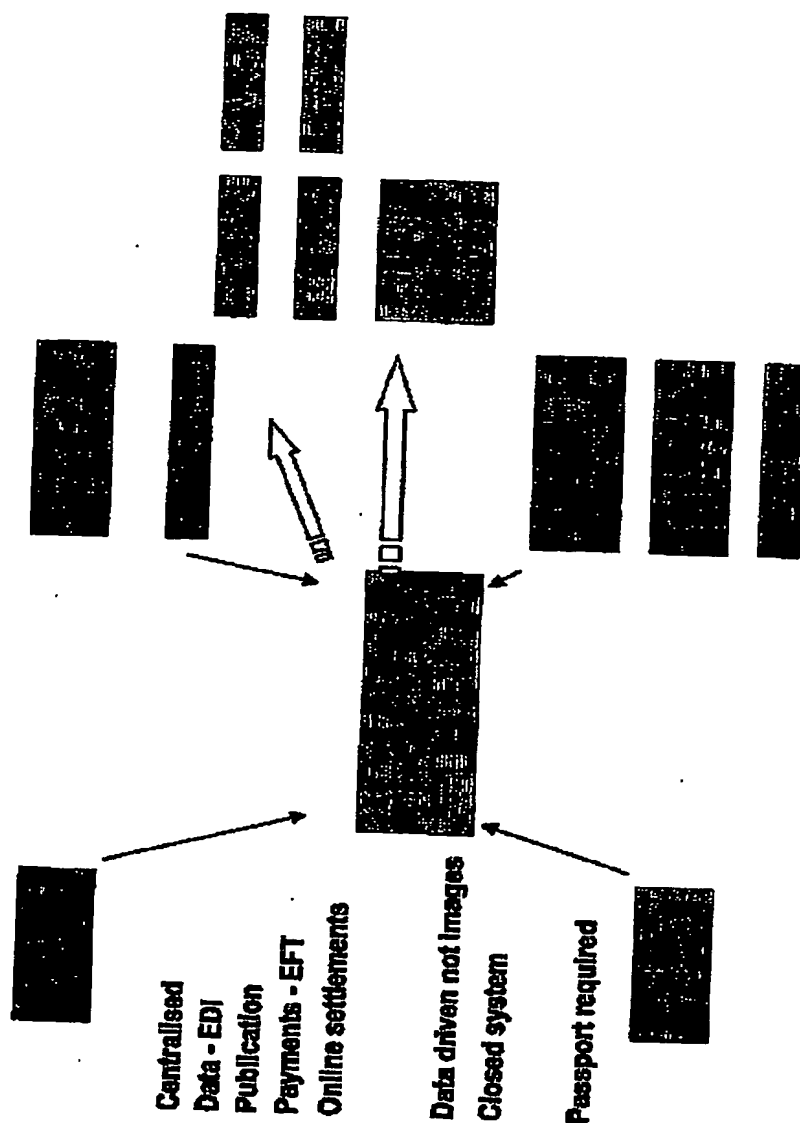


FIGURE 1



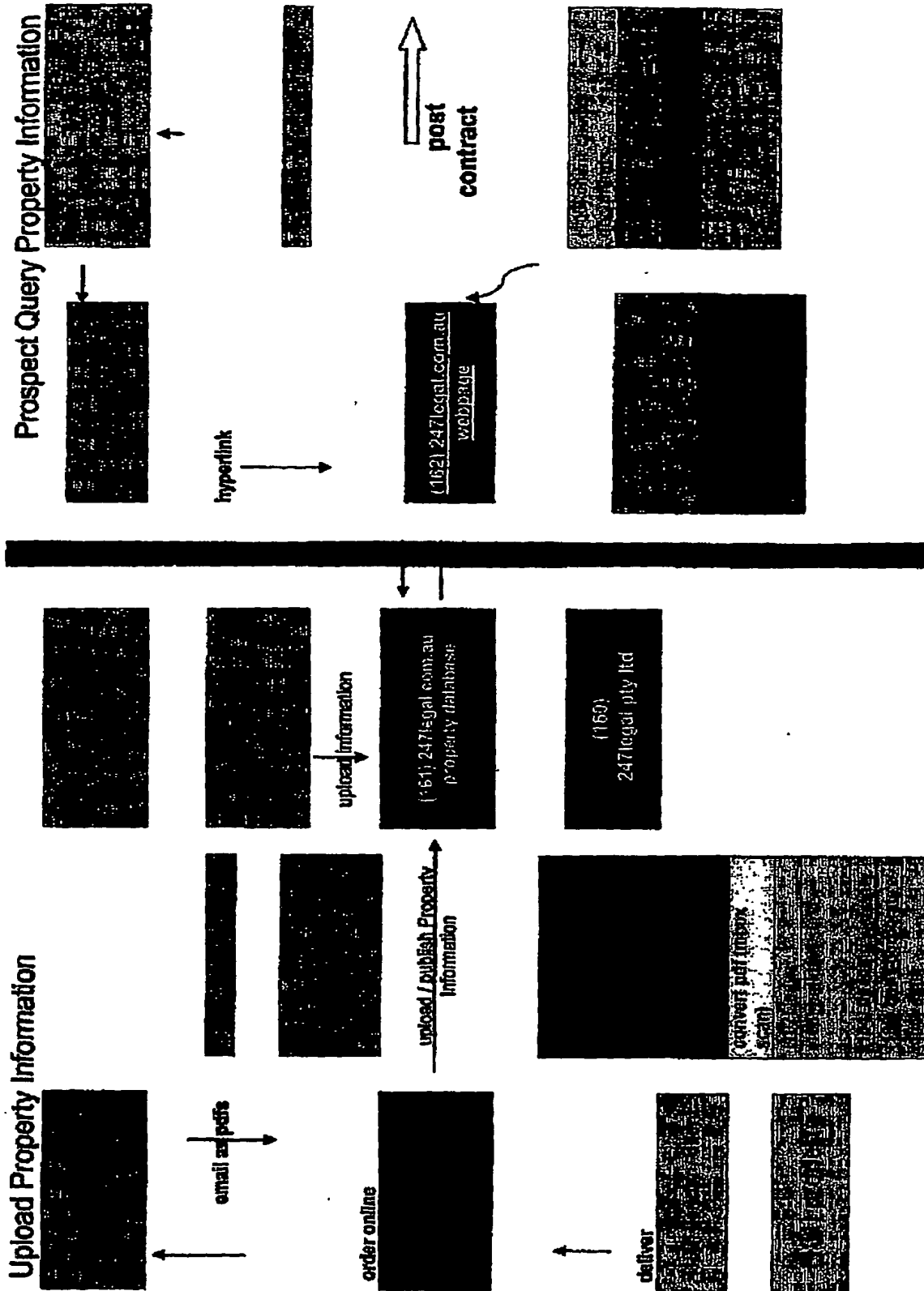
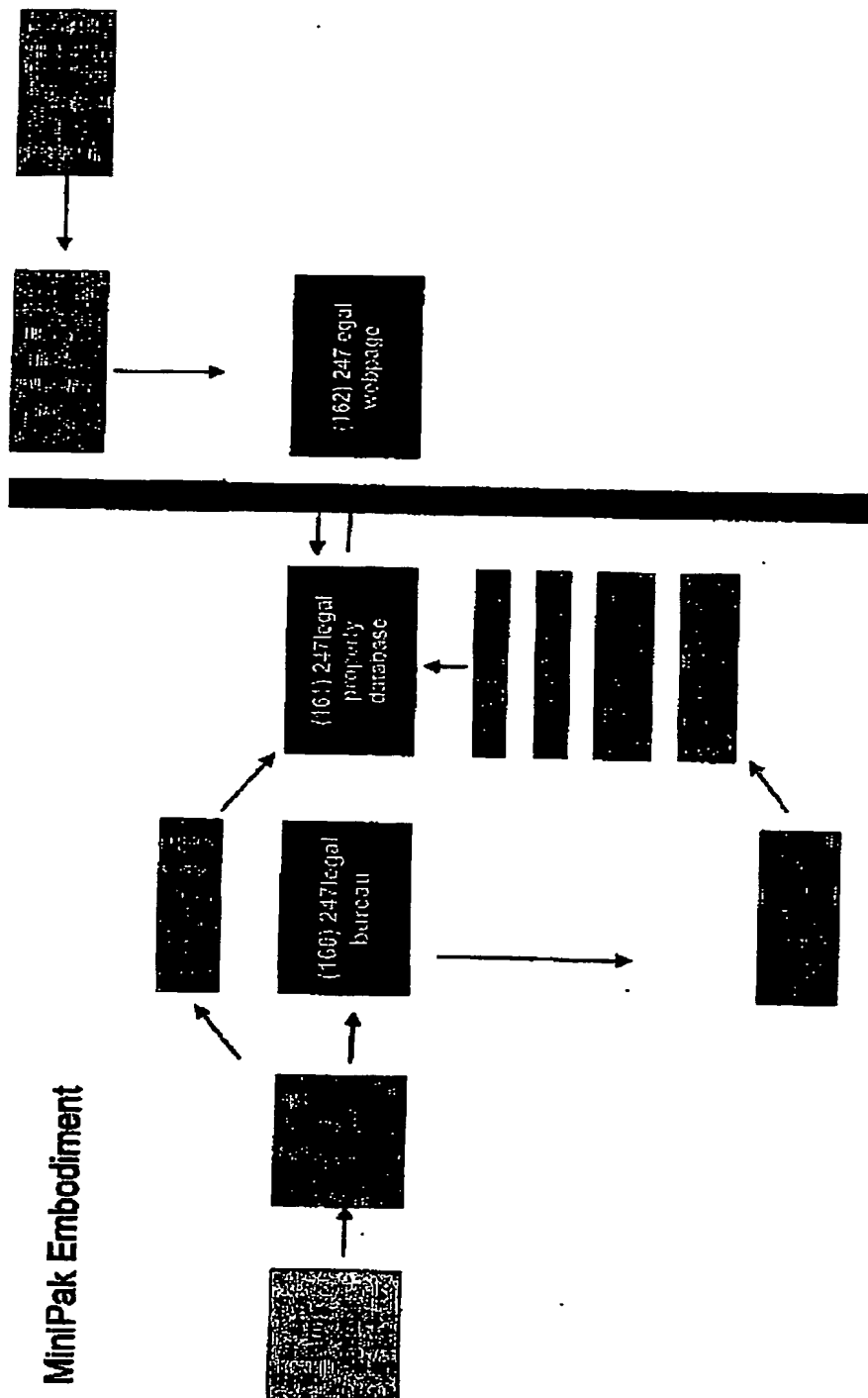


FIGURE 3



**FIGURE 3A**

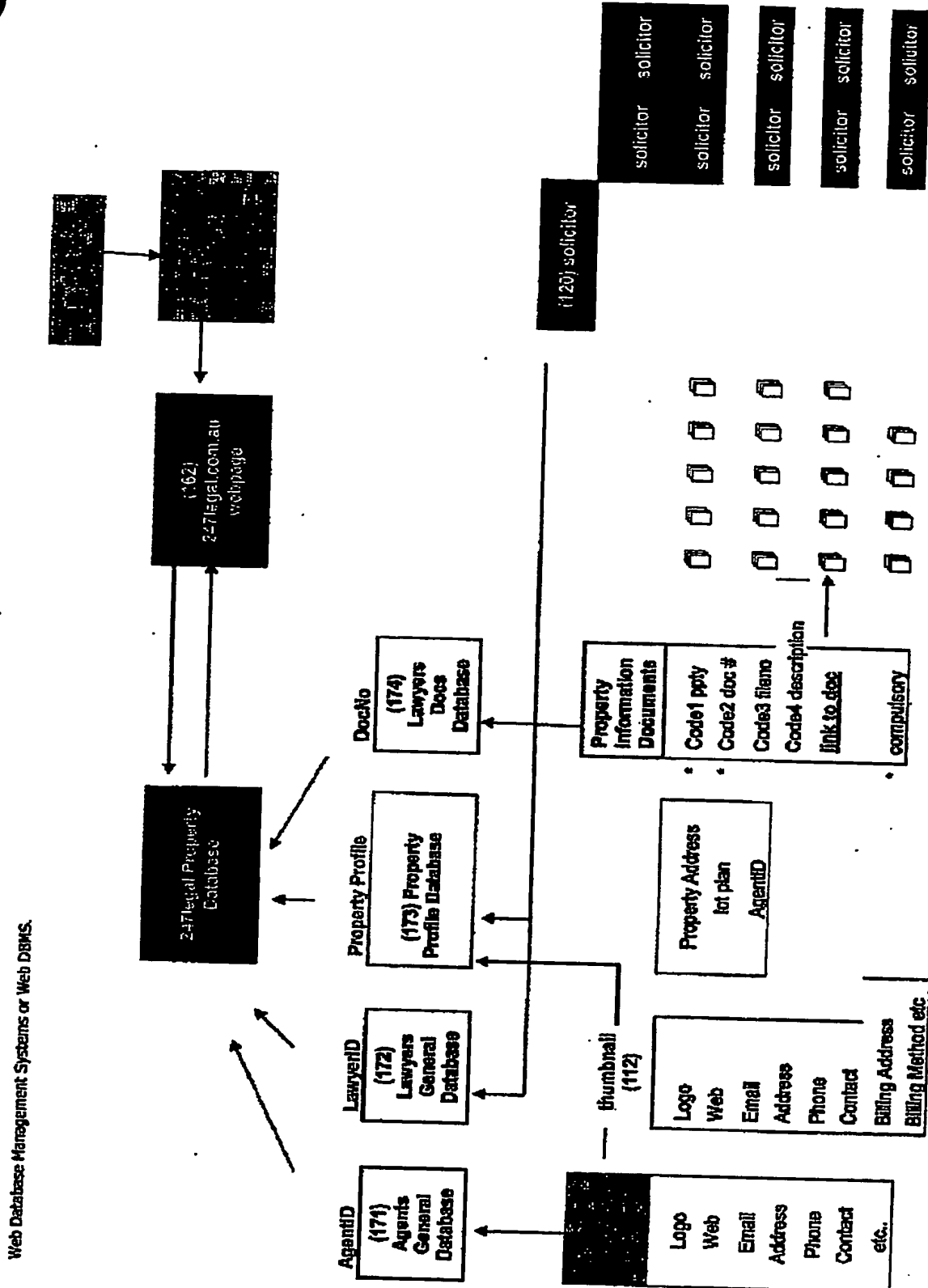


FIGURE 4



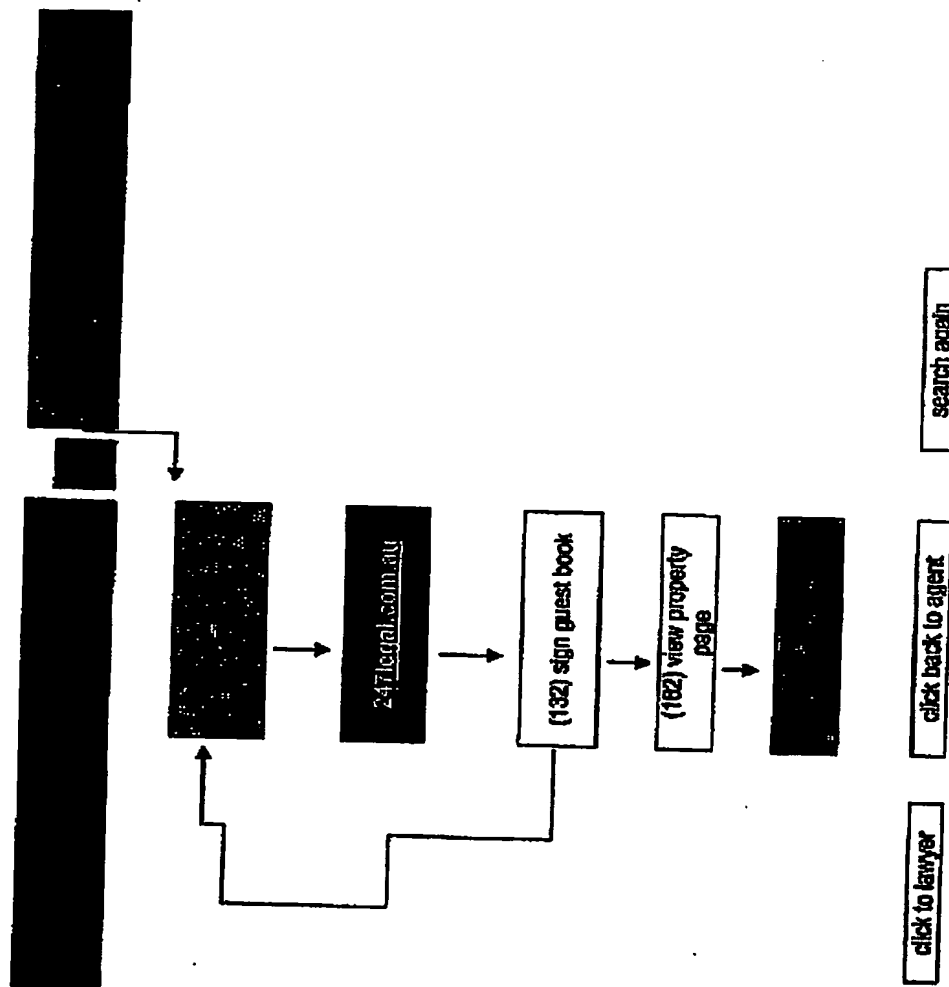


FIGURE 5

Codes		Property has unique PrimaryKey PropertyCode (not plan)	
11	Full Contract	21	Certificate of Title 1
12	Contract Front Page	22	Certificate of Title 2
13	Contract Particulars	23	Plan Subdivision
14	Contract Special Conditions	24	Encumbrance / Covenant 1
15	Contract General Conditions	25	Encumbrance / Covenant 2
16	Guarantee	26	Section 173 Agreement
17	Section 27 (Generic)	27	Planning Sec 198
18	Requisitions & Answers	28	Council
19	Section 32	29	Water
20		30	Water Encumbrance
		31	Land Tax Sec 187
		32	Building Reg 210
		33	VicRoads
		34	National Trust
		35	
		36	
		37	
		40	Evidence of Ownership
		41	Body Corporate
		42	Building Permit
		43	Building Occupancy Permit
		44	Building Warranty
		45	Lease Schedule
		46	Lease Document
		47	Other
		48	
		49	
		51	Photo
		52	Thumbnail
		53	Summary
		54	
		55	

Lawyer uploads as pdf files

InfoSource email pdf certificates to 247legal.com.au &/or lawyer

Upload to 247legal.com.au as pdf file

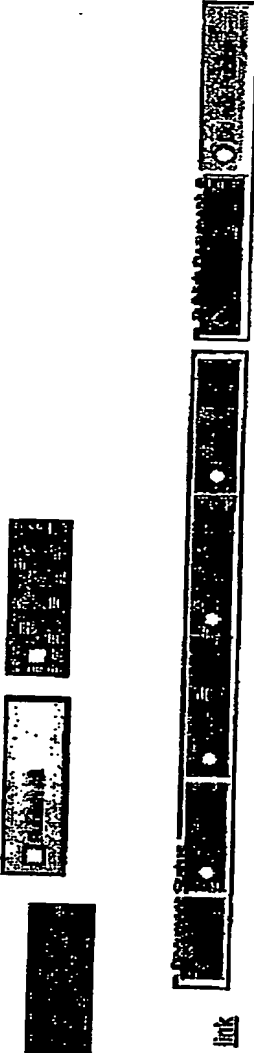
FIGURE 6

<b>LawyerID</b>		<b>Manual</b>	
Primary Key	password required	Add / Update / Delete Profile	
PropertyCode	lotplan		
710 Lawyer details			
720 Property Address		Lawyer adds property profile	
Lot Number:		>>> generates PropertyCode	
Unit Number:		>>> generates hyperlink for Agent to insert into their webpage	
Street Number:			
Street Name:			
Street Type:			
Suburb:			
Postcode:			
Volume:			
Folio:			
Lot:			
Plan:			
Melway			
730 Client details:			
Vendor			
Registered Proprietor (if not Vendor)			
740 Agent details			
lookup agent / AgentID			
Thumbnail			
Code & Upload Contract Documentation			

Figure 7

# Property Documents

## Checklist



## Methodology to upload

### Contract of Sale

- 11 Full Contract
- 12 Contract Front Page
- 13 Contract Particulars
- 14 Contract Special Conditions
- 15 Contract General Conditions
- 16 Guarantees
- 17 Section 27 (Generic)
- 18 Requisitions & Answers
- 19 Section 32
- 20 0

If uploaded, link will appear automatically.  
Lawyer will also have option to publish or not to publish.

[link](#)

### Property Certificates

- 21 Certificate of Title 1
- 22 Certificate of Title 2
- 23 Plan Subdivision
- 24 Encumbrance / Covenant 1
- 25 Encumbrance / Covenant 2
- 26 Section 173 Agreement
- 27 Planning Sec 198
- 28 Council
- 29 Water
- 30 Water Encumbrance
- 31 Land Tax Sec 197
- 32 Building Reg 210
- 33 VicRoads
- 34 National Trust
- 35 0
- 36 0
- 37 0
- 38 0

[link](#)

Figure 7

39	0		
C.	Client Legal Documents		
40	Evidence of Ownership		
41	Body Corporate		
42	Building Permit		
43	Building Occupancy Permit		
44	Building Warranty		
45	Building Survey report		
46	Lease Schedule		
47	Lease Document		
48	Other		
49	0		
		links	
			ditto
			ditto
			ditto
			ditto
			ditto
			ditto
			ditto

FIGURE 7

247Legal logo		Agent Logo	
<b>Property Profile</b>			
810	Lawyer details		
820	Property Address		
840	Agent details		
<b>Property Documents</b>			
A.	Contract documents	11-20	Published by authorisation
B.	Property Certificates	21-39	On Order etc Published automatically
C.	Client Legal Documents	40-49	On Order etc Published by authorisation
<b>Checklist Document Status (126)</b>			
Document Status			
A.	Contract documents		
11	Full Contract		
12	Contract Front Page		ditto
13	Contract Particulars		ditto
14	Contract Special Conditions		ditto
15	Contract General Conditions		ditto
16	Guarantee		ditto
17	Section 27 (Generic)		ditto
18	Requisitions & Answers		ditto
19	Section 32		ditto
20	0		ditto
B.	Property Certificates		

Figure 8

21	Certificate of Title 1	ditto
22	Certificate of Title 2	ditto
23	Plan Subdivision	ditto
24	Encumbrances / Covenant 1	ditto
25	Encumbrances / Covenant 2	ditto
26	Section 173 Agreement	ditto
27	Planning Sec 198	ditto
28	Council	ditto
29	Water	ditto
30	Water Encumbrance	ditto
31	Land Tax Sec 187	ditto
32	Building Reg 210	ditto
33	VicRoads	ditto
34	National Trust	ditto
35	EPA	ditto
36	0	ditto
37	0	ditto
38	0	ditto
39	0	ditto
40	Legal Documents	ditto
41	Evidence of Ownership	ditto
42	Body Corporate	ditto
43	Building Permit	ditto
44	Building Occupancy Permit	ditto
45	Building Warranty	ditto
46	Building Survey report	ditto
47	Lease Schedule	ditto
48	Lease Document	ditto
49	Other	ditto
	0	ditto

FIGURE 8

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